

Minutes for the October 5 meeting of the Resident Data Center Study Committee Conference Room 135 - CITY HALL

Meeting called to order at 6PM by Merate Barakat

Present: Merate Barakat, Jacob Gallagher, Duane Wolf, Timothy Stewart, David Taylor, William Gutowski, Yiwen Wu, Robert Pfaff, Lee Anne Willson, James Pease, Lu Liu, Scott Nelson, Chloe Parsons, Sid Juwarker.

Not present: Jeff Kopaska

Approval of the minutes – James Pease Moved, Bill Gutowski Seconded, approved by voice vote.

Introductions of two members not present last week: Sid Juwarker and Robert Pfaff.

The bulk of the discussion was about how to organize the work. That included the timeline, the topics, and the methods.

The timeline: The committee is to have a preliminary, if not final, report drafted in December; revisions, if needed, to be done in January, and a report submitted in February for consideration by the Council in March. This suggests most of the research should be accomplished before the end of November.

Members of the committee were reminded that they need to complete open meetings training by December 21.

The Topics: Designating subcommittees was discussed at length, with three possible divisions considered: By the topics mentioned in the charge to the committee; by the physics – light, water, waste, and sound; and growing out of the interests of the committee (starting with the list from Ames Voice). The decision was to go with the third approach, and committee members chose which group they would join:

Water and waste: William Gutowski, Lu Liu, Timothy Stewart, and David Taylor

Nature: Bill Gutowski, Sid Juwarker, Timothy Stewart, and Merate Barakat

Heat and light and sound: Bill Gutowski, Chloe Parsons, Lee Anne Willson, and Duane Wolf

Planning and social impact: Sid Juwarker, Scott Nelson, Robert Pfaff, Yiwen Wu, and Merate Barakat

Impact on People and health: Jacob Gallagher, Robert Pfaff, Yiwen Wu, and Merate Barakat.

Industry expertise: Duane Wolf, David Taylor, Sid Juwarker, and Scott Nelson

It was noted that the five first groups would probably all have questions for the industry group, and that questions that recur might be answered in a FAQ thread.

There was discussion about the parameters of data centers that are relevant for this committee; For example, a 200MW data center would draw more power than Ames uses now even including the university, so bigger than that seems unlikely to happen here. Also, there is limited land inside the city limits even including the 2 mile buffer zone, and infrastructure does not exist to serve a data center everywhere in that area. Some of the effects we are looking at may have minimal impact below a certain size or power density (Watts/square meter) as well. There are also data centers for different purposes – co-location, AI, and crypto being examples – that might affect the impact.

Although the following were not explicitly included in the charge to the committee, they were felt to be relevant and worth consideration:

Waste, including water that has been used for cooling, outdated machines, and buildings no longer needed.

Effects on humans beyond noise, light and heat: For example, the impact on a neighborhood of a large structure with an unappealing exterior.

Committee members expressed concern that often the burden of living near a large data center falls disproportionately on people with the fewest resources.

Impacts of the construction phase were also discussed; for a large data center this can produce temporary high demand for housing and displace people with longer-term ties to the community.

In many of the areas discussed, there is little or no refereed literature specifically referring to the impact of data centers on humans, wildlife, etc. but there is literature on, for example, the effects of light and sound on people, animals, and structures. The committee will rely on the expertise of its members to translate those results to the context of data centers.

Some discussion concerned how we can function as subgroups without violating open meetings law. Is a chat on Teams where several people are online at the same time count as a meeting, or is it still “asynchronous” if not planned as a meeting? The committee will work with the city to make sure the constraints are clear.

There was brief consideration of what constitutes a reliable source of information. In addition to refereed publications and reports by other cities or similar entities, some

information may be based on the expertise and/or experience of members of the committee. As long as the source is clear, the information can be in the report, and the City Council can decide whether to consider it or not. The committee was chosen for its expertise in finding, evaluating, translating, and putting into context what is in the literature.

Discussion of process included consideration of how AI might be managed. The city does not have a policy, and there was some concern what the committee decides might be setting a precedent. For this reason, the committee chose a minimal and short AI policy:

Motion: We will not use AI to generate text. Always go to original sources. Individuals will acknowledge AI assistance.

Robert Pfaff moved, David Taylor seconded. Approved by voice vote (7:55 p.m).

The next meeting of this committee will be held October 26, location to be announced.

Bob moved, Scott seconded a motion to adjourn. Approved by voice vote.

Submitted 10/6/2026 by Lee Anne Willson